

# VARIETIES OF THE HASAN TRADITION

By JAMES ROBSON

## ABBREVIATIONS

*Bā'it* = *al-Bā'it al-hāfiṭ*, a commentary on Ibn Katīr's *Iḥtiṣār 'ulūm al-hadīt*, by Ahmād Muḥammad Ṣākir, 2nd edn. (Cairo, 1370/1951).

*E.I.* = *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, 5 vols. (Leiden, 1913-38).

*E.I.<sup>2</sup>* = New edn. of above. In progress (1954-).

*G.A.L.* = C. Brockelmann, *Geschr. der arab. Litt.*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1943, 1949); Supplement, 3 vols. (Leiden, 1937-42).

*H.H.* = Ḥājjī Ḥalīfa, *Lexicon bibliographicum et encyclopaedicum*, vols. 1, 2 (Leipzig, 1835-7); vols. 3-7 (London, 1842-58).

*J.A. (ix)* = "Le Taqrīb de En-Nawawi, traduit et annoté par M. Marçais", *Journal Asiatique*, série ix, in vols. XVI-XVIII.

*J.A.O.S.* = E. E. Salisbury, "Contributions from Original Sources to our Knowledge of the Science of Muslim Tradition", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, VII (1862), 60 ff.

*Kifāya* = al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Kitāb al-kifāya fi 'ilm al-rivāya* (Haidarābād, 1357/1938).

*Ma'rifa* = al-Ḥakīm Abū 'Abdallāh al-Naisābūrī, *Ma'rīfat 'ulūm al-hadīt*, ed. Dr Mu'aẓẓam Husain (Cairo, 1937).

*Sarkis* = Joseph Elian Sarkis, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de bibliographie arabe* (Cairo, 1930).

*Tabdīb* = Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tabdīb al-tabdīb*, 12 vols. (Haidarābād, 1325-8/1907-10).

*Taqīb* = Ṭāhir b. Ṣalīḥ b. Ahmād al-Jazā'īrī al-Dimashqī, *Taqīb al-nazār ilā uṣūl al-aṣār* (Cairo, 1328/1910).

*'Ulūm* = Abū 'Amr 'Ugmān b. 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *'Ulūm al-hadīt*, with the commentary of Zain al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Husain al-Irāqī entitled *al-Taqqid wal idāb*, ed. with notes by Muḥammad Rāḡib al-Tabbāh al-Halabī (Aleppo, 1350/1931).

Some of the technical terms used in connexion with *Hadīt* have given rise to considerable discussion without any convincing conclusion being reached. This is sometimes due to a term being used with different meanings at different periods, but sometimes there is difficulty about terms which have not had such a development of meaning. Among these are such as *hasan garīb* and other combinations of terms with *hasan*, which are found throughout Tirmidī's *Jāmi'*.<sup>1</sup> It is his practice to add notes to his traditions to indicate their quality, and this is where we meet these terms.

<sup>1</sup> Tirmidī's *Jāmi'* is one of the six collections of Tradition accepted by Sunnis. Tirmidī d. 279/892. Cf. G.A.L. I, 169 f., S. I, 267 ff.

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As Ibn al-Salāh<sup>1</sup> mentions in ‘Ulūm al-hadīt, “The book of Abū ‘Isā al-Tirmidī is a basic work regarding knowledge of the *hasan* tradition, and he is the one who made it famous and mentioned it frequently in his *Jāmi‘*”.<sup>2</sup> But while Tirmidī gives an explanation at the end of his *Jāmi‘* of what he means by the term *hasan*, he does not explain what he means when he combines *hasan* with another word or words. He says, “By what we have mentioned as a *hasan* tradition in this book we mean simply that its *isnād* is *hasan* in our opinion. Every tradition which is transmitted which has no one in its *isnād* who is suspected of falsehood, which is not *sādd*,<sup>3</sup> and has something to the same effect transmitted by another line is in our opinion a *hasan* tradition.”<sup>4</sup> He follows this by a statement about *garīb*, a term we shall meet frequently, and so it is convenient to quote his words here. He says,

Regarding what we have mentioned as a *garīb* tradition in this book, traditionists consider a tradition *garīb* for different reasons. Many a tradition is *garīb* through being transmitted by only one line... many a tradition is considered *garīb* only because of an addition which occurs in the tradition, for it is sound only when the addition comes from one on whose retentive memory reliance is placed... and many a tradition is transmitted by many lines and is considered *garīb* only because of the nature of the *isnād*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 577–643/1181–1245. G.A.L. I, 440–2, S. I, 610 f.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Ulūm, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Sādd* means isolated, anomalous, or irregular. It has different meanings at different periods. The point to consider is what it could have meant to Tirmidī. Ibrāhim b. Abū ‘Abla (d. 152/769) said, “He who transmits the *sādd* (traditions) of the learned transmits much evil” (*Kifāya*, p. 140). Ṣāfi‘i (150–204/767–820) considered it was the type in which a reliable authority gives something which disagrees with what is transmitted by other authorities (*Ma‘rifa*, p. 119; *Kifāya*, p. 141; ‘Ulūm, p. 83). Hākim considered it to be the type in which an authority gave material which had no support from a tradition transmitted by any other, but he did not consider it to be defective (*Ma‘rifa*, p. 119). Ibn al-Salāh considered there were classes of *sādd* traditions of varying degrees of authority (‘Ulūm, p. 86). The way Tirmidī uses the word suggests that he agreed with the earlier view that *sādd* traditions were not reliable, for they are clearly of less authority than the *hasan* in his view. The acceptance of some kinds of *sādd* seems to belong to a later period than Tirmidī. He may have agreed with the view of Ṣāfi‘i mentioned above. For further reference see J.A.O.S. VII, 110; J.A. (ix), XVII, 101 ff.; *Tayyib*, pp. 220–2.

<sup>4</sup> II, 340.

<sup>5</sup> In this quotation from the *Jāmi‘* the dots indicate the omission of examples given in illustration. For further reference to *garīb* see *Ma‘rifa*, pp. 94 ff.; ‘Ulūm, pp. 229 ff.; J.A.O.S. VII, 100, 109; J.A. (ix), XVII, 112 n., XVIII, 106 f.; H.H., IV, 322 f.; Tahānawī, pp. 1087 f.; *Tayyib*, p. 209.

Traditionists came to divide traditions into three main groups: (1) *sabib* (sound); (2) *hasan* (good); and (3) *da'if* (weak), or *sagim* (infirm). Here we are concerned particularly with the second group, but we shall find that it sometimes gets combined with the first. As our special interest in the *hasan* type in this article is when the term is combined with one or more, I first give a translation of a passage which gives some of the varying views. It is taken from *Taujib al-nazar ilā uṣūl al-atar* by Tāhir b. Ṣāliḥ b. Ahmad al-Jazā'iri<sup>1</sup> (Cairo 1328/1910). Jazā'iri, who was born in 1268/1851 and died in 1338/1920, spent most of his life in Damascus. Sarkis gives a list of twenty-four books and pamphlets which he wrote. This work, from which the following translation is made, is a large one dealing mainly with the technical terms used by traditionists. It is not an original work, but it has value because it gathers together quotations from many well-known authorities. On the *hasan* tradition he has some subsections. What follows is a translation of the one entitled:

**THE MEANING OF TIRMIDĪ'S PHRASE,  
“THIS IS A HASAN SAHĪH TRADITION” AND SUCH LIKE<sup>2</sup>**

The *bāfiż* Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī<sup>3</sup> said in his notes on Tirmidī's *Jāmi'* which he called *Qūṭ al-muqtaḍī*:<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ said there is dubiety about the phrase “this is a *hasan sabib* tradition” used by Tirmidī and others, because the *hasan* falls short of the *sabib* and by combining them with regard to one tradition there is a combination of the denial and the confirmation of that falling short. He said the reply to this is that that refers back to the *isnād*, so when one tradition is transmitted with two *isnāds*, one being *hasan* and the other *sabib*, it may properly be said to be a *hasan sabib* tradition; that is, it is *hasan* with reference to one *isnād* and *sabib* with reference to another, though it cannot be denied that some who used (159) that phrase meant *hasan* in its ordinary meaning (a view to which one inclines and which the mind does not reject), rather than in its technical meaning which is the subject with which we are dealing. End of quotation.<sup>5</sup>

Ibn Daqiq al-Id<sup>6</sup> said in *al-Iqtirāb*:<sup>7</sup> The first reply is rebutted by the

<sup>1</sup> G.A.L. S. II, 777 f., III, 383 f.; Sarkis, cols. 688–91.

<sup>2</sup> The passage is on pp. 158–62. I have indicated in parentheses in the course of the translation where the pages from 159 onwards begin.

<sup>3</sup> 849–911/1445–1505. G.A.L. II, 180 ff., S. I, 178 ff. <sup>4</sup> G.A.L. S. I, 268.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Ulūm, p. 44. This is the end of Suyūtī's quotation from Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. Jazā'iri's quotation from Suyūtī's book continues to p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> d. 702/1302. G.A.L. II, 75, S. II, 66.

<sup>7</sup> The full title is *al-Iqtirāb fī bayān al-iṣṭilāb*. G.A.L. II, 75. His words are quoted in Ḥarāqī's commentary on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, pp. 44–6 for the purpose of disagreeing with them.

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traditions about which *hasan sabib* is used although they have only one source. Tirmidi says in some places, "This is a *hasan sabib* tradition which we know only by this line of transmission". What I say in answer to this question is that falling short of the *sabib* is not made an absolute proviso regarding the *hasan*; the falling short applies to it and is understood regarding it only when he confines himself to saying *hasan*, for the falling short affects it only in a restricted way and does not affect its real and essential nature.<sup>1</sup> The explanation and clear meaning of that is that here there are qualities applicable to the transmitters which require the acceptance of the transmission, and those qualities are of different degrees, some higher than others, like, for example, vigilance,<sup>2</sup> retentive memory<sup>3</sup> and freedom from imperfection;<sup>4</sup> so the presence of a lower degree like truthfulness<sup>5</sup> and lack of being suspected of falsehood<sup>6</sup> is not contradicted by the presence of something higher than it, as when retentive memory is combined with truthfulness. So it is right that it should be called *hasan* with reference to the lower quality which is, for example, truthfulness, and *sabib* with reference to the higher quality which is retentive memory and freedom from imperfection. On this ground every *sabib* must be *hasan*, and that is made necessary and supported by the saying of people regarding *sabib* traditions, "This is a *hasan* tradition". This is found in the speech of people of earlier generations. End of quotation.

The *bāfiż* 'Imād al-Dīn Ibn Katīr<sup>7</sup> said: This question is fundamentally misdirected because the combination of the quality of *hasan* and that of *sabib* in one tradition is a grade intermediate between the *sabib* and the *hasan*. So here there are three grades of which the *sabib* is the highest and the *hasan* is the lowest, and the third is that which is impregnated by both of them; for everything which has an incomplete resemblance to one of them has a separate grade for itself, just as one says of what is *muzz*, which is that which contains sweetness and sourness, "This is bitter-sweet", that is, *muzz*. On this ground what he calls *hasan sabib* is of a higher grade in his opinion than the *hasan*, and his judgement that a tradition is *sabib* pure and simple is stronger than his judgement that

<sup>1</sup> He argues that Tirmidī's definition of *hasan* already quoted above, p. 48, applies only when *hasan* is used by itself, and not when it is combined with another term.

<sup>2</sup> *tayaqqez*.      <sup>3</sup> *bifz*.      <sup>4</sup> *itqān*.      <sup>5</sup> *ṣidq*.

<sup>6</sup> 'adam al-tubma bil kidb. 'Ulūm, pp. 133 f. mentions *mutqin* and *bāfiż* among the highest types of transmitters, and *ṣadūq* and *maballubu al-ṣidq* among the second grade.

<sup>7</sup> 701-74/1301-73. G.A.L. II, 60 f., S. II, 48 f. He wrote a summary of 'Ulūm entitled *Iḥtiyār 'ulūm al-ḥadīt* which has been published with a commentary by Ahmad Muhammad Ṣākir under the title *al-Bā'if al-ḥadīt* (2nd edn., Cairo). There is no date of publication, but the preface is dated 1370/1951. A much shorter statement than that quoted by Ibn Daqīq al-Id is found there, p. 47.

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it combines the quality of the *sabīb* with that of the *basan*. The *ḥāfiẓ* Abul Faḍl al-‘Irāqī<sup>1</sup> said in the points he raised about Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ: This which Ibn Katīr said is a judgement with no proof, and it is remote from what people have understood Tirmidī's words to mean. The *imām* Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkāšī<sup>2</sup> and the *ḥāfiẓ* Abul Faḍl Ibn Ḥajar<sup>3</sup> both said in the points raised about Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ that this requires the establishment of a third class, and no one holds this view. Zarkāšī's explanation is that it goes against the general agreement; then it would involve the idea that Tirmidī's book contains only few *sabīb* traditions because he seldom confines himself to the statement, “This is a *sabīb* tradition”, yet most of what he refers to as having the quality of *sabīb* along with that of *basan* is found in the two *Sabībs*. The *ṣaib* Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī<sup>4</sup> said also in *Mabāsin al-iṣṭilāb* that this reply requires consideration, but the *imām* Šams al-Dīn al-Jazārī<sup>5</sup> said explicitly in *al-Hidāya*: By what Tirmidī called *sabīb basan* he meant that it was a mingling of the quality of the *sabīb* with that of the *basan*, so it is therefore inferior in meaning to *sabīb*.

Zarkāšī said: If you ask my opinion about removing this ambiguity I reply that it is possible he may mean by saying *basan sabīb* in this particular form that the two terms are synonymous, and the fact that he uses this seldom<sup>6</sup> is a proof that it is allowable, just as some have employed it where they have described the *basan* as having the quality of the *sabīb* according to the view of those who have inserted the *basan* in the *sabīb* class. But it is possible he may intend the real meaning of both of them in one *isnād* with reference to two sets of circumstances and two times; for it is allowable that he may have heard this tradition from a man when he was in the condition of being *mastūr*,<sup>7</sup> or of having a reputation for truthfulness and trustworthiness, then that man who caused him to hear it may have advanced, his condition having risen to the grade of full reliability, so Tirmidī or someone else may have heard it from him on another occasion and told it with the two descriptions. It has been transmitted on the authority of more than one that

<sup>1</sup> d. 806/1404. *G.A.L.* II, 77 f., S. II, 69 f. His commentary on Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ entitled *al-Taqyid wal idāb* is printed in the Aleppo edition of ‘Ulūm. The quotation above is on p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> 745–94/1344–92. *G.A.L.* II, 112 f., S. II, 108.

<sup>3</sup> 773–852/1372–1448. *G.A.L.* II, 80 ff., S. II, 72 ff.

<sup>4</sup> 724–805/1324–1403. *G.A.L.* II, 114, S. II, 110. For his book quoted see *G.A.L.* I, 441, S. I, 611.

<sup>5</sup> 751–833/1350–1429. *G.A.L.* II, 257 ff., S. II, 274 ff. *G.A.L.* II, 260, S. II, 277, no. 13 give the title of his book as *al-Hidāya ilā ma’ālim* (‘ilm) *al-rivāya*. H.H. VI, 473 gives *Hidāya ilā ‘ulūm al-rivāya*.

<sup>6</sup> He uses it very frequently.

<sup>7</sup> Lit. “concealed”. Used of one who appears to be reliable, but whose intrinsic reliability is not known. See ‘Ulūm, p. 121; *J.A.* (ix), xvii, 135 ff.; *Bā’if*, p. 107.

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he heard a single tradition from a single *ṣaib* on more occasions than one. This possibility, even if it is remote, is the most likely opinion which is held (160). It is also possible that Tirmidī may have expressed his personal opinion that it had the quality of being *hasan* and someone else's that it had the quality of being *sabib*, or *vice versa*; so it is clear that the tradition is in the highest grades of the *hasan* and the first grades of the *sabib*, and he combined the two terms with reference to the two opinions. If you consider Tirmidī's manner of dealing with it you may perhaps rely on this being his purpose. End of Zarkašī's words, but some of it is taken from al-Ja'bārī<sup>1</sup> where he says in his *Muhtaṣar* that his phrase *hasan sabib* has reference to two *sanads* or to two opinions.

The hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said in *al-Nukat*:<sup>2</sup> Some of those of later times have replied regarding the root of the ambiguity that it has reference to the truth of the two descriptions concerning the tradition with relation to the circumstances of its transmitters in the opinion of the leading traditionists; so when there is among them one whose tradition is *sabib* in the view of some and *hasan* in the view of others, that phrase is used about it. But fault is found with this on the ground that if he had meant that he would have used *wāw* (and) with reference to his opinion and not with reference to the combination, and said *hasan wa-sabib*. One's first thought is that Tirmidī is just pronouncing judgement on the tradition with reference to something else, which goes contrary to the reply. One should also restrict oneself to the consideration of the traditions in which Tirmidī combined the two descriptions; then if some of them contain matter about whose soundness no one disagrees it goes contrary to the reply also. But if this reply were granted it would be nearer to his meaning than anything else. I incline to it and am pleased with it, and it is possible to reply to the rejection made of it. It is said his meaning may be that that has reference to two different descriptions, viz. the *isnād* and the judgement; so it is possible that his use of *hasan* has reference to its *isnād* and his use of *sabib* has reference to his judgement, because it belongs to the class of what is accepted and everything which is accepted may be called sound without qualification. This follows the opinion of those who do not separate the *hasan* from the *sabib* but call both *sabib*. Yet that is rejected by what we have first of all cited, that Tirmidī has often expressed that judgement about traditions whose *isnād* is *sabib*. Some of those of later times have replied that he meant *hasan* in the way of those who separate between the two classes because its transmitter falls short of the grade of what has technically the quality of the *sabib*, and *sabib* in the way of those who do

<sup>1</sup> 640-732/1242-1333. G.A.L. II, 132 f., S. II, 134 f. I cannot identify this *Muhtaṣar*. H.H. mentions three *muhtaṣars* by him in I, 268; V, 476; VI, 176.

<sup>2</sup> This may be his work *al-Nukat al-zirāf 'alal atrāf*. See G.A.L. S. II, 75, no. 77.

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not separate between them; but that is refuted by what we have cited before. One of those with whom I came in contact preferred the view that the two words in his opinion are synonymous and that his use of the second word after the first is by way of giving it confirmation just as one says *sabib tābit* (sound and reliable), *jayyid qawi* (good and strong), etc.; but the rule may go contrary to it, for taking it in the basic meaning is better than taking it as corroboration because the root principle involves the absence of corroboration. But sometimes the opposition to that is rejected by the presence of a text which indicates that it is so, for we have found more than one, like al-Dāraqutni,<sup>1</sup> use the phrase, "This is a *sabib tābit* tradition". To sum up, the strongest reply is that given by Ibn Daqiq al-Id. End of the words of the *ḥafiz* Ibn Hajar in *al-Nukat*.

He said in the commentary on *al-Nubba*:<sup>2</sup> When the *sabib* and the *hasan* are combined in one description the uncertainty concerning the transmitter which arises in the one who applies his mind to the subject is whether the conditions demanded for the quality of the *sabib* are all to be found in him, or whether he falls short of them; this is where he is alone in giving that transmission. The sum of the reply is that the uncertainty of the leading traditionists about its transmitters requires that one who applies his mind to the subject should not give just one of the two descriptions, but it should be called *hasan* with reference to its description in the opinion of some and *sabib* with reference to its description in the opinion of others. Its purpose is that the particle indicating uncertainty has been elided from it because one ought rightly to say *hasan au sabib*, and this is similar to the elision of the conjunctive particle from what follows it.<sup>3</sup> On this ground what is called *hasan sabib* is inferior to what is called *sabib*, because a clear statement is stronger than uncertainty. This applies to transmission by a single authority; but if the transmission is not by a single authority the application of the two descriptions together to the tradition has reference to two *isnāds*, one *sabib* and the other *hasan*. On this ground what is called *hasan sabib* is superior to a tradition by one transmitter which is called simply *sabib* (161) because numerous lines of transmission add strength.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 306-85/918-95. G.A.L. I, 173 f., S. I, 275.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Hajar supplied a commentary along with his book *Nubbat al-fikr fi muṣṭalaḥ abl al-atar*. Cf. G.A.L. I, 441, S. I, 611.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. what Ibn Hajar has said on that subject above, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Note that Ibn Hajar's statements here differ from that of Ibn Katīr (see p. 50 above). Ibn Hajar treats *hasan sabib* as inferior to *sabib* only if there is just one transmitter, and if the combination of terms means that one does not know which of the two should be applied. He then goes on to argue that when there are more *isnāds* than one, the combination of the two terms indicates a class higher than *sabib* if that term is used of a tradition which has only one transmitter.

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If the question is raised how Tirmidi can say about some traditions, “*Hasan ḡarib*, we know it only by this line” when he has expressly stated the condition applicable to the *hasan* to be that it should be transmitted by more than one line, the reply is that Tirmidi did not give a comprehensive explanation of the *hasan* but only of a particular class which occurred in his book, viz. what he calls *hasan* without any other qualification. That means that he calls some traditions *hasan*, others *sabih*, others *ḡarib*, others *hasan sabih*, others *hasan ḡarib*, others *sabih ḡarib*, others *hasan sabih ḡarib*, and his explanation applies only to the first. His form of expression is a guide to that where he says in the last part of his book, “By what we have called in our book a *hasan* tradition we mean simply that its *isnād* is *hasan* in our opinion. Every tradition which is transmitted whose transmitter is not suspected of falsehood, which has something to the same effect transmitted by another line and is not *ḥadd* is in our opinion a *hasan* tradition.”<sup>1</sup> In this way he makes it known that he is explaining what he calls simply *hasan*. As for what he calls *hasan sabih*, or *hasan ḡarib*, or *hasan sabih ḡarib*, he did not undertake its explanation just as he did not undertake the explanation of what he calls simply *sabih* or simply *ḡarib*. He seems to have omitted that through feeling satisfied that it was well known among those who deal with this branch of knowledge and confined himself to explaining what he calls in his book simply *hasan*, either because of its obscurity or because it was a new technical usage. On that account he restricted it by saying “in our opinion”, and did not attribute it to the traditionists as al-Ḥattābi<sup>2</sup> did. By this statement many of the citations to which long study has been devoted without their aim being made clear are rebutted. To God be the praise for what He has inspired and taught!

I<sup>3</sup> say that two other ways of explaining it have occurred to me. One is that it means *hasan li-dātibi* and *sabih li-ḡairibi*;<sup>4</sup> the other is that it means *hasan* with reference to its *isnād* and *sabih*, that is, the soundest thing which has come down on the subject, for the phrase “The soundest thing which has come down is such and such” is used even if it is *hasan* or *da‘īf*, so what is meant strengthens it or reduces its weakness. Then Tirmidi was not alone in using this technical term but was

<sup>1</sup> Note the transposition of phrases compared with Tirmidi’s text translated above, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> d. 386/996, or 388/998. G.A.L. I, 174, S. 1, 275.

<sup>3</sup> After quoting a number of sources Suyū’l now offers some suggestions of his own.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dīhlawī (958–1052/1531–1642), for whom see G.A.L. S. II, 603, is quoted in J.A.O.S. VII, 100 to the effect that *sabih li-dātibi* (intrinsically sound) is used of a tradition which is perfectly sound, and *sabih li-ḡairibi* of one which falls short of perfection in some respect, but is supported by other lines of transmission by means of which the deficiency is adjusted. For *hasan li-dātibi* and *hasan li-ḡairibi* see below, p. 57.

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preceded in its use by his *Saib* al-Buhārī as Ibn al-Šalāh<sup>1</sup> has handed down in a work other than his *Muhtasar*, and also al-Zarkašī and Ibn Ḥajar in their *Nukat*. Zarkašī said: Know that this very question occurs regarding Tirmidī's words, "This is a *hasan garib* tradition", because it is a condition of the *hasan* that it should be known by another line of transmission while the *garib* is that which is given by only one transmitter, and between them there is a contradiction. The answer is that *garib* is applied to different classes, *garib* with respect to the text and *garib* with respect to the *imād*, and the meaning here is the second, not the first. This is because this type of *garib* is known on the authority of a number of the Companions but someone was alone in his transmission from a Companion. So with regard to the text it is *hasan*, but with regard to the *imād* it is *garib* because only one of that company transmitted it. There is no contradiction between the *garib* in this sense and the *hasan*, contrary to other types of *garib*, for they contradict the *hasan*. End of the quotation from *Kūl al-muqtadī*.

The very learned Taqī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Taimīya<sup>2</sup> was asked about this question and matters related to it, and said in reply: As for the *garib*, it is that which is known by only one line of transmission. Sometimes it is *sabīb*, like the tradition that deeds are to be judged by intentions,<sup>3</sup> his<sup>4</sup> prohibition of selling and giving away the right of succession,<sup>5</sup> and the tradition that he entered Mecca with a helmet on his head.<sup>6</sup> These are *sabīb* in Buhārī and Muslim, but they are *garib* in the opinion of traditionists. The first is established only on the authority of Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī<sup>7</sup> from Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Taimī<sup>8</sup> from 'Alqama b. Waqqās al-Lātī<sup>9</sup> from 'Umar b. al-Haqqāb;<sup>10</sup> the second is known only in the tradition of 'Abdallāh b. Dīnār<sup>11</sup> from 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar;<sup>12</sup> and the third is known only by the transmission of Mālik<sup>13</sup> from al-Zuhri<sup>14</sup> from Anas;<sup>15</sup> but most *garib* traditions are *da'if*. As for the *hasan*

<sup>1</sup> In *'Ulūm*, p. 38 (cf. *Bā'it*, p. 63) Ibn al-Šalāh mentions Ahmād b. Ḥanbal and Buhārī among others before Tirmidī who used *hasan* sporadically. But probably the reference here is to people before Tirmidī using *hasan garib*.

<sup>2</sup> 661–728/1263–1328. *G.A.L.* II, 125 ff., *S.* II, 119 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Buhārī, *Bad' al-wābi*, 1; Muslim, *Imāra*, 155.

<sup>4</sup> I.e. the Prophet's.

<sup>5</sup> Buhārī, *Itq*, 10; Muslim, *Itq*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Buhārī, *Maġāzī*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> d. 144/761, or 146. *Tabdīb*, XI, 221 ff.

<sup>8</sup> d. 119/737, or 120, or 121. *Tabdīb*, IX, 5 ff.

<sup>9</sup> d. during the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (65–86/685–705).

*Tabdīb*, VII, 280 f.

<sup>10</sup> The second Caliph, assassinated 23/644. *E.I.* III, 982 ff.

<sup>11</sup> d. 127/744. *Tabdīb*, V, 201 f. <sup>12</sup> d. 73/693. *E.I.* I, 53 ff.

<sup>13</sup> d. 179/795. *E.I.* III, 203 ff.; *G.A.L.* I, 184 ff., *S.* I, 297 ff.

<sup>14</sup> d. 124/742. *E.I.* IV, 1239 ff.

<sup>15</sup> d. c. 91–3/709–11. *E.I.* I, 482. 'Ulūm, pp. 84 f. mentions these three traditions in the chapter on the *Jādd* type. Cf. above, p. 48, n. 3.

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in Tirmidi's technical usage, it is that which is transmitted by two lines, which contains among its transmitters no one who is suspected of falsehood, and is not *jādd* disagreeing with (162) sound traditions. These are the conditions which Tirmidi laid down regarding the *hasan*, but some people say that at times he applies the name *hasan* to what is not of that nature, such as a tradition which he calls *hasan ḡarib*, for it is transmitted by only one line, yet he has called it *hasan*. The answer has been given that it is sometimes *ḡarib*, being transmitted from only one Follower, but it has been transmitted from him by two lines, so becoming *hasan* because of the number of its lines of transmission from that person, though originally *ḡarib*. Similarly, the *sabīb hasan ḡarib* is sometimes transmitted with an *isnād* which is *sabīb ḡarib*, then is transmitted from the earliest transmitter by a *sabīb* line of transmission and by another, becoming by that means *hasan* though it is *sabīb ḡarib*, because the *hasan* is that which has a number of lines and contains no one who is suspected. If it is *sabīb* by the two lines it is *sabīb* pure and simple, but if the soundness of one of the two lines is not known, this is *hasan*. It is sometimes *ḡarib* with respect to the *isnād*, being known through that *isnād* only by that line of transmission, while it is *hasan* with respect to the text, because the text has been transmitted by two lines. On this account one says, "And in the chapter from so and so and so and so", thus there are witnesses to its sense which make clear that its text is *hasan* even if its *isnād* is *ḡarib*. If one says at the same time that it is *sabīb* it will have been established by a *sabīb* line and transmitted by a *hasan* line, so the qualities of being *sabīb* and of being *hasan* are combined in it. It may be *ḡarib* by that line, no line other than that being known for that *isnād*, and if it is *sabīb* by that line it is sometimes *sabīb ḡarib*. This is a matter about which there is no doubt; the doubt affects only the combination of the qualities of *hasan* and *ḡarib*. But it has already been said that it is sometimes *ḡarib* and then becomes *hasan*, so it is *hasan ḡarib* according to what has been mentioned regarding the two meanings. This contains enough for those who are diligent and careful.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The passage translated above is mainly taken from Suyūṭī's *Qūt al-muqitadī*, a commentary on Tirmidi's *Jāmi'*, followed by a much shorter quotation from Ibn Taimīya. The quotations given by Suyūṭī and the statement made by Ibn Taimīya show that the difficulty of explaining some of the technical terms used in connexion with *Hadīt* may arise because we find a combination of terms which appear to be contradictory. This difficulty does not affect *sabīb ḡarib* in the same way as it affects others. A *sabīb* tradition is one which has a fully connected *isnād* consisting of

men all of whom are thoroughly reliable. *Garib* is used of a tradition which comes from one man at some stage or stages, or in which one transmitter gives a detail not supplied by anyone else, and the term may apply to either text or *isnād*. If all the transmitters are men of the highest authority, this type of *garib* is also *sabīb*; but it is recognized that most *garib* traditions are not *sabīb*. There is, however, nothing inherently contradictory between the two terms, and so it is quite natural to find them combined on occasion.

If it is possible to explain *sabīb garib*, it is not so easy to justify *hasan garib* which Tirmidī uses frequently, or *garib hasan* which he uses occasionally. Ibn al-Šalāḥ gives Ḥattābī's definition of *hasan* thus: "The *hasan* is that whose origin is known and whose men are well-known. It is the pivot of most of *Hadīt*, is accepted by most of the learned, and used by all the *faqīhs*".<sup>1</sup> He quotes Tirmidī's statement already given on p. 48.<sup>2</sup> He also says that one of a later time (explained by al-'Irāqī as being Abul Faraj Ibn al-Jauzī)<sup>3</sup> held that the *hasan* type is that which contains a slight weakness which can be forgiven, and may be used as a basis on which *faqīhs* can work.<sup>4</sup> But Ibn al-Šalāḥ is not satisfied with all this, saying that Tirmidī and Ḥattābī do not really distinguish between *sabīb* and *hasan*. He therefore suggests that the *hasan* is of two types: (1) the tradition whose *isnād* is not free from someone who is *mastūr*, whose proficiency is not fully ascertained, but who is not negligent or guilty of many errors in what he transmits, or suspected of falsehood in connexion with Tradition, and there should be a tradition to similar effect transmitted by one or more lines; (2) the tradition whose transmitter has a reputation for truthfulness and trustworthiness, but who does not reach the grade of men quoted in *sabīb* traditions because he falls short of them in retentive memory and complete exactness, yet is of a higher grade than the one whose traditions are rejected when he is the only transmitter. The tradition must also contain no weakness. He says that (1) corresponds to Tirmidī's explanation and (2) to Ḥattābī's.<sup>5</sup>

A distinction is made between *al-hasān li-dātībi* and *al-hasān li-gairībi*. The former, which may be translated "intrinsically good", is the type which has no weakness or anomaly and has a connected *isnād* consisting of men recognized as trustworthy and

<sup>1</sup> 'Ulūm, pp. 30 f.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ulūm, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> 510-97/1116-1200. G.A.L. I, 659 ff., S. I, 914 ff.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ulūm, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> 'Ulūm, pp. 32-4.

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accurate, but not quite so accurate as transmitters of *sabīb* traditions. The second, which may be translated "extrinsically good", is the type which does not inspire complete confidence if it is the only transmission, but which may be considered if the material is transmitted also by some other line.<sup>1</sup> One would imagine that if the term *hasan ḡarīb* is justifiable it must refer to a tradition of the type of *hasan li-dātibī*, but to give a satisfactory judgement on this matter it would be necessary to pick out and examine every tradition which is called *hasan ḡarīb* or *ḡarīb hasan*. Ibn Ḥajar, following Ibn Daqīq al-‘Id, evades an explanation by arguing that Tirmidī's definition of *hasan* applies only when that word occurs by itself and not when it is combined with some other term.<sup>2</sup> Zarkaši suggests that *hasan ḡarīb* means that the tradition is *hasan* with reference to the text but *ḡarīb* with reference to the *isnād*.<sup>3</sup> This is a possible explanation, for while the text or something similar to it may be known by other lines of transmission, there may be something in the particular *isnād* which classes it as *ḡarīb*. Ibn Taimiya agrees that this is so in some instances, and holds that sometimes it may be *ḡarīb* at one stage of the *isnād* and *hasan* at a later one.<sup>4</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq suggests that it may be *ḡarīb* by one line and *hasan* by another.<sup>5</sup>

While there is some disagreement about the meaning of *hasan sabīb*, it does not generally present so much difficulty. The common explanation is that this is a type whose *isnād* is *hasan* but is supported by another whose *isnād* is *sabīb*. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ gives this explanation, but he qualifies it by expressing an inclination to accept the view of those who hold that here *hasan* is not used in its technical sense, but in its ordinary meaning of "good".<sup>6</sup> There are other attempts to explain *hasan sabīb*. Ibn Katīr says it represents a class intermediate between *sabīb* and *hasan*, but this is rejected by Ḥirāqi who says there is no proof of it.<sup>7</sup> Zarkaši suggests that *hasan* and *sabīb* are synonymous, and then that such traditions may have been heard at different times, once when

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *J.A.O.S.* vii, 100; *J.A.* (ix), xvi, 499, 502 f.; *Tayyib*, pp. 147 f., and n. 4 on p. 54 above. *J.A.* (ix) uses *hasan bi-ḡairibi*.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 50, 54.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> *J.A.O.S.* vii, 101. On p. 102 he mentions a view that the term may mean *hasan* or *ḡarīb*, and another, which he considers far-fetched, that *hasan* is to be understood in its everyday meaning.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Ulūm, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. ‘Ulūm, p. 47; *Baṣīṭ*, p. 47, and above, p. 50, where Ibn Katīr's words are given with explanatory addition.

some transmitter's qualifications were not known to be of the highest grade and later when this came to be known;<sup>1</sup> but this does not sound a very likely explanation. He explains it otherwise by saying that Tirmidī may have considered *hasan* what someone else considered *sabīb*, or *vice versa*, and so Tirmidī applied both terms to it.<sup>2</sup> This guess sounds at least possible. Ibn Hajar inclines to this latter view which can be explained by the omission of the conjunction *wa* (and) between the two terms.<sup>3</sup> But although he has said this and has followed it by criticizing some other views, he declares the strongest view to be that of Ibn Daqīq al-Id<sup>4</sup> who argues that different qualities may be combined among the transmitters, some higher than others, and that *hasan* and *sabīb* refer to different qualities, for the presence of a quality of lower grade is not contradicted by the presence at the same time of a quality of higher grade. He argues that such qualities as, for example, vigilance, retentive memory and freedom from imperfection are of the highest grade, whereas such qualities as truthfulness and lack of being suspected of falsehood are of lower grade. The tradition might therefore be called *hasan* with reference to someone who has the quality of truthfulness, and *sabīb* with reference to someone who has the quality of freedom from imperfection, for he is presumably referring to different men in an *isnād* where everyone is not of the very highest quality. He says his argument is supported by the fact that every *sabīb* tradition is *hasan*, for people of earlier generations said regarding *sabīb* traditions, "This is a *hasan* tradition". One wonders, however, whether *hasan* in such a statement was not used in its ordinary meaning of "good" at a time before it became a technical term. Ibn Hajar also discusses the possibility of *hasan sabīb* meaning *hasan* or *sabīb*, but he allows this only if there is a single *isnād* about whose quality there is uncertainty. Otherwise he comes back to the more general view that *hasan sabīb* applies to two *isnāds*, one *hasan* and the other *sabīb*.<sup>5</sup>

Tirmidī also uses *hasan sabīb garib*, *hasan garib sabīb*, *sabīb hasan garib*, and *garib hasan sabīb*. These terms do not find much explanation so far as I have been able to discover. Ibn Hajar makes the astonishing suggestion that Tirmidī did not explain them because they were well known among traditionists.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Taimiya says of *sabīb hasan garib* that it is sometimes transmitted with an

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> See above, pp. 50 and 53.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 54.

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*isnād* which is *sabīb garīb*, then is transmitted from the earliest transmitter by a *sabīb* line and by another, so becoming *hasan* as well as *sabīb garīb*.<sup>1</sup> This is possible, but one would like an explanation of the other groupings of the three terms. Do they indicate different types, or are they all used with the same meaning?

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, whose '*Ulūm al-hadīt*' is recognized as a classical work on the various branches of *Hadīt* studies, attempts to explain *hasan sabīb*,<sup>2</sup> but he has nothing to say about *hasan garīb*, or *hasan sabīb garīb*, or any other of the combinations of terms mentioned above. One wonders why he left such terms unnoted, for his book deals very fully with all matters relating to *Hadīt*, and normally he does not omit any technical terms which are generally recognized as such. The only suggestion one can make is that he had no explanation to offer, and therefore he left these terms unmentioned. He cannot have failed to be aware of them, for he was familiar with Tirmidī's work. Although the earlier writer al-Ḥākim<sup>3</sup> was also familiar with Tirmidī's work he does not discuss his technical terms.<sup>4</sup> One might also have expected some information from al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī<sup>5</sup> in his book *al-Kifāya fi 'ilm al-riwāya*, but although he deals with a number of technical terms, he does not mention the types of *hasan* traditions. While it is unfortunate that Tirmidī did not explain all the terms he used, it is strange to find that little is said about them till a fairly late period. It is striking that the discussion of some of the terms mentioned above seems to belong to a later date than Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. It is said to have taken some considerable time before Tirmidī's *Jāmi'* was recognized as an authoritative work, and this may provide some partial explanation of the delay in trying to explain his terms. One's guess is that some of the terms used by Tirmidī were peculiar to himself, and as he gave no explanation of their meaning, earlier scholars felt no urge to explain them. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ could go the length only of *hasan sabīb*, and even here he was in two minds as to its meaning.<sup>6</sup> It was left to a later generation to explain some at least of the terms; but unfortunately one feels that the efforts of later scholars are mere conjecture without any real basis for the explanation. What is

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> P. 44.

<sup>3</sup> 321-405/933-1014. G.A.L. I, 175, S. I, 276 f. See *Ma'rifa*, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ulūm, p. 45 says Ḥākim did not treat *hasan* as a separate class, but included it among the classes of *sabīb*.

<sup>5</sup> 392-463/1002-71. G.A.L. I, 400 f., S. I, 562 ff.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ulūm, p. 44.

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needed is an examination of the places where these terms are used in order to see whether any principle can be discovered. But here too there may be a difficulty, for Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ has warned us that copies differ in calling traditions *hasan*, *hasan sabīh*, and such like, and so he gives the advice to collate a number of copies and rely on matters about which they agree.<sup>1</sup> If this is so, it is obvious that a very wide field of study is opened up, for one cannot attempt to explain the various combinations of terms satisfactorily before one has formed an opinion about which term *Tirmidī* used in the various traditions.

<sup>1</sup> 'Ulūm, p. 38.